

AAME winners sing similar songs

By Roger Teel

US Army Ordnance Center & Schools

If your unit seeks recognition and hopes to compete for an Army Award for Maintenance Excellence next year, comments from this year's AAME winners might provide some insight.

Following are several vignettes and comments from this year's winning organizations, collected during AAME ceremonies in Washington, D.C., on June 3.

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Thrust with her unit into the Iraqi war zone was 1st Lt. Michelle Carabello of Bravo Company, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade (Light), 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan.

"Last year we were second (in AAME competition) in FORSCOM (Forces Command), but our unit was in the process of standing up in January 2006," Carabello said. "By February 2007 we were deployed to the Rasheed district – the main effort in Baghdad. We were the second 'surge' brigade to actually go.

"It was a pretty intense year," she added.

"We're a Brigade Support Battalion with eight companies, a huge component," she continued. "We supported four maneuver battalions, were backup for a special troops battalion, and backup for the brigade headquarters – plus everybody else. In all, we supported 26 different units. There were over 8,000 people on our forward operating base (FOB).

"We had line items worth jillions of dollars, if that's a word," Carabello said.

"I think we got the award for just the massive amount of stuff that we did. We did battalion resets in the middle of a war zone. Repaired over 3,000 NVGs (night vision goggles), provided armament for nine battalions' weapons – that's 5,000 to 6,000 weapons – and our automotive guys trained between 200 to 300 Iraqi nationals on how to fix their own vehicles.

"The biggest thing we did was recovery – our service and recovery team provided service and welding. They up-armored vehicles, everything from RG31s to M113s, putting cages around them, about 15 of them, to buffer them from RPGs (rocket propelled grenades) when they hit. Our guys put cages on M113s and Strykers, about 100 of those.

"Our recovery guys were Number One – everybody called for them. They did some impressive stuff – picking up everything from M113s to Strykers to Bradleys. They fixed Humvees on the spot.

"Plus the unit had command and control of the FOB main gate, with 150 vehicles and people coming through every day," Carabello said.

The unit had 80 Soldiers doing this immense mission.

"We have five mechanics, about 30 Soldiers a day tasked to gate, 10 actual wheel-vehicle mechanics in the motor pool, 1 or 2 weapons guys, and our inspectors – two of them," she said.

Each vehicle rolling out of the FOB was given a thorough inspection. "Not one vehicle went out the gate with a deficiency. After the MiTT (Military Transition Teams) saw what the 610th BSB could do in the way of providing safety for their Soldiers, word got around. They'd call and say, 'We heard you do a good job checking out vehicles.'"

"It's because we were proactive getting equipment in and back out to the users," Carabello said.

"Obviously it's a team effort," she continued. "I was blessed with some of the finest warrant officers and senior NCOs I've ever met. All my guys, all my techs, were the one reason I could finish that last email or finish typing that last report."

A great deal of cross-training took place as well. Soldiers were retrained on welding.

Then came modifications on the new MRAPs (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles).

"Our welder just stepped up and said he could do it – and made it happen. When Gen. David Patraeus, Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), visited us, our guy was singled out and received a 4-star coin.

"There is no doubt that these Soldiers' talents and being proactive kept the BCTs (Brigade Combat Teams) and Stryker units in the fight. The maintenance they did, solving problems and being proactive about it, kept routes cleared."

What will Carabello take from this experience?

"If you put it in conjunction with winning the award, yeah, we did some great stuff. But it's the standard and the discipline – leadership enforcing standards, demanding so much from the troops. And they performed their mission to task.

"Believe me, the grammar took me longer than knowing what it was I wanted to write (in the AAME nomination packet)," she said.

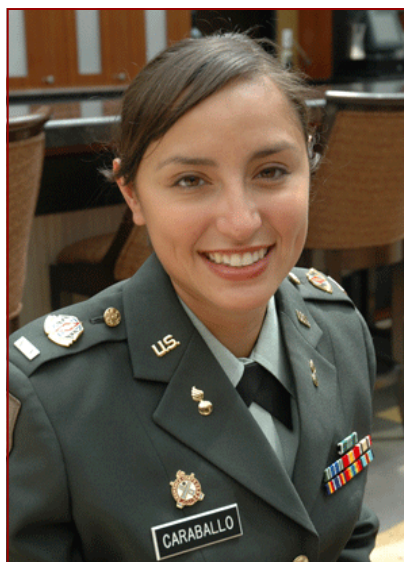
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Runners-up in the AAME's Army Reserve (Small) Category was Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 341st Medical Evacuation Battalion from Mesquite, Texas, represented by Capt. Shenika Baisley and Master Sgt. Andrea Senegal.

"We set winning the AAME as a goal because we were here last year," Baisley said, obviously enjoying her one-week stay in the nation's capitol. "We worked together as a team. That's the most important thing."

To sustain excellence, the unit takes a unified approach.

"We work as a team – in both supply and maintenance," Baisley said. "Some units might do it separate, but in our unit supply and maintenance work together."



1st Lt. Michelle Carabello
Bravo Co., 610th Brigade Support Bn.

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Members of the 264th Service Company, Salinas, Puerto Rico, with the Chief of Ordnance, Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead, and Regimental Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Eubanks at AAME ceremonies

First time - only time - winners

"First time we compete, first time we win," said Staff Sgt. Edwin Morales of the 264th Service Company (C&C) from Salinas, Puerto Rico, winners of the AAME for medium-sized Army Reserve elements.

However, the unit will not repeat next year.

"In the beginning we were told the unit was deactivating in September. They told us if we wanted to compete it was our last year, so we went for it. And we did it!"

"We were really prepared," Morales added. "Our chief warrant officer prepared the books, as motor sergeant I prepared the motor pool, and we have a reservist who's been an active-duty supply sergeant — so we had a good team."

Winning the AAME was the 264th's goal. And Morales said he would be moving on to the 276th Maintenance Company, another Army Reserve unit in Puerto Rico.

The unit worked to improve its maintenance posture throughout the year, with all Soldiers assisting in all sections -- preparing, organizing, conducting inventory and servicing equipment. Their motor pool had an equipment readiness rate of 91 percent during the year.

The 264th also participated in Operation Platinum Wrench 2007 at Fort McCoy, Wis., where they completed 100 work orders that saved more than \$341,333 in re-useable parts for customer units in the Army Reserve. The unit managed and operated the Ft. McCoy Installation Maintenance Management Activity Cannibalization Point and provided maintenance support to the Army Reserve and the Global War on Terrorism.

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"You have to," added Senegal, "especially with the (number of) hand receipts we have. If we didn't work as a team our hand receipts would be messed up."

"You have to go beyond normal duty hours, too," Baisley and Senegal both said. "A lot of nights we were there until one or two in the morning. An 8 to 5 work schedule won't get it done."

The 341st is a small unit of only 70 Soldiers, but has seven support units including ambulance companies. Their headquarters has about 100 line items in its inventory.

"We'll be back next year, but with another unit," Baisley said, as both she and Senegal will soon be moving to new units.

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Staff Sgt. Kofi Hanson, Prescribed Load List (PLL) clerk for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, V Corps in Schweitzingen, Germany, said his motor pool continues to build on success.

Recipients of a US Army, Europe, maintenance excellence award in 2005, the unit was runner-up in the large Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) category in 2007.

"With regard to maintenance, we follow the doctrine and the matrix SOPs and also the manuals, making sure our subsystems are up to standard, files, everything is updated. We have lots of command support," Hanson said.

"We have established a level of excellence. And in order for us to compete each year we have to maintain what we have now."

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"There's a team concept, hard work in every section," added Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Dawson. "We pooled everyone together, told them this is what we need and here are the guidelines we need to follow. There were lots of late nights and lots of dedication and good leadership.

"We hope to continue to improve on a daily basis. Seeing our comrades here (at the AAME ceremony), talking to them about what they did to get here, we see one or two things we may be shy on or need to improve on, so we're all helping each other do better," Dawson said.

Senior member of the V Corps team, Warrant Officer 1 Phillip Renck, may have best described what the maintenance excellence program is all about.

"It's real easy to see what right looks like right now," Renck said. "So when we go someplace, it's easy to see what's not right.

"Ninety percent of what we did comes from doctrine," he added. "Once we started planning for this, we all had to go back and read our regulations to get the right answers. And now we know them.

"It all goes back to learning and understanding the doctrine, making sure that everyone knows what's black and white — and obviously using outside agencies — HAZCOM, the safety office — having teams come inspect you. You need outside eyes looking at your hole," Renck said.

"This is a program, when you fall into it, it goes with you wherever you go. This program really shapes you for the future," he added.

CWO2 Shawn Schmidt of the 1221st Transportation Company, Dexter, Mo., said winning an AAME "was a goal." "This was the first time we put a packet in, and it was the first time we've won. Obviously, maintenance is important to us. We take our job seriously.

The unit has about 148 Soldiers, Schmidt said, mostly in MOS 88M.

What did they do to win?

"We have a bunch of good NCOs, good people, and command emphasis - the right leadership was in place to make it work.

"Our goal now is about how well we're doing our job, and we're just gonna keep on doing our job," he said.

Top 10 winning ways to earn recognition

1. Phase one information was verified in Phase two evaluations.

2. Non-reported equipment was not discovered during the evaluation.

3. Winning organizations initiated procedures that improved existing systems.

4. Organization SOPs that were well organized were followed.

5. Quality control and safety programs were maintained with active councils.

6. MTOE and/or TDA shortages were on order with no excess on hand.

7. Unit PLL and shop stock records were 100 percent; required parts were on hand or on order.

8. Winners took a unit-level approach to maintenance.

9. Winning organizations maintained excellent records.

10. Winners performed maintenance the entire year, not just in preparation for the AAME evaluation.

Evaluator comments:

— "Some units excelled because they viewed the AAME process as a competition, making them try even harder to be the best at everything."

— **"Organizations that got the entire unit involved in the AAME competition resulted in a total team effort, which is great for any organization and with outstanding results."**

— "Leadership often viewed it as a way to get recognition for a unit that was already doing great things."

— **"Organizations experiencing high OPTEMPO used AAME as a distracter to demonstrate the abilities of junior leaders and enlisted personnel and their significant role and impact on unit maintenance."**

— "Though not recommended, some units used the competition to have a non-partisan set of eyes review unit maintenance operations. In some cases it resulted in improved performance without critical attention being brought to the problem areas."

— **"Some units do not have a means/method to recognize an entire unit/organization. The AAME process allowed this while placing emphasis on maintenance, the most critical task on hand and necessary for almost all assigned missions."**

— "Units that performed best recognized maintenance were not confined to vehicles or weapons."

— **"Some better performing units had proactive chains of command and supported the AAME competition. This was hands-on help and not just leaving a list of things to be corrected. Units with this type of support were enthusiastic about AAME and what it meant to be a winner."**

— "Though not always true, the show of support during a unit in-brief to the evaluators was often an indicator of how well a unit would perform. As a minimum it showed the unit and evaluators a support level that is good for unit moral. This is, of course, assuming the support was not misinterpreted as a self served goal by the leaders. It is 15 minutes of time well spent, and gives commanders an opportunity to say thanks before winners were announced."

— **"Unit's that had participated in the past seemed to perform better, due to knowing maintenance of ALL Army equipment/material is necessary."**

Winners — 2007 Army Awards for Maintenance Excellence

Active Army MTOE— Small

B Company, 610th BSB
FT Riley, KS (FORSCOM)
Runner-up
G Company, 307th BSB
FT Bragg, NC (FORSCOM)

Active Army MTOE— Medium

101st FSB
FT Riley, KS (FORSCOM)
- Runner-up -
B Company, 123rd MSB
Dexhiem, GE (USAREUR)

Active Army MTOE— Large

3rd BN, 43rd ADA
FT Bliss, TX (FORSCOM)
- Runner-up -
HHC, Special Troops BN, V Corps
Schwetzingen, GE (USAREUR)

TDA— Small

6981st Civilian Support Group
Mannheim, GE (NETCOM)
- Runner-up -
Equipment Concentration Site #33
FT Riley, KS (USARC)

TDA— Medium

Combined Support Maintenance Shop
Eastover, SC (NGB)
- Runner-up -
39th Signal Brigade
Chievres, BE (NETCOM)

TDA—Large

Maintenance Activity Kaiserslautern
Kaiserslautern, Germany (USAREUR)
- Runner-up -
527th MI Battalion
Camp Humphreys, Korea (INSCOM)

Army Reserve— Small

HHD 346th Transportation Battalion (MT)
Ceiba, PR (USARC)
- Runner-up -
HHD, 341st Med Evac Battalion
Mesquite, TX (USARC)

Army Reserve—Medium

264th Service Company (C&C)
Salinas, PR (USARC)
- Runner-up -
425th Transportation (MT) Petro
Salina, KS (USARC)

Army Reserve—Large

396th Combat Support Hospital
Vancouver, WA (USARC)
No runner-up awarded

National Guard—Small

HHD, 751st Maintenance Battalion
Eastover, SC
- Runner-up -
HQ, 217th Personnel Services Battalion
Butler, NC

National Guard—Medium

1221st Transportation Company
Dexter, MO
- Runner-up -
1344th Transportation Company
East St Louis, IL

Prepare for next year

Nominations for the 2008 AAME program are due 12 Dec 08 to the US Army Ordnance Center & Schools. Official guidance is available at:
www.goordnance.apg.army.mil



A room full of winners at the 2007 Army Awards for Maintenance Excellence ceremonies June 3 in Washington.

***“ It’s real easy to see
what right looks like
right now. So when we
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to see what’s not right.”***

**— WO1 Phillip Renck
HHC, Special Troops Bn.,**



The Chief of Army Ordnance, Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead, above, addressed the AAME winners and delivered her STEADFAST life philosophy. Below, the general and Regimental Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Eubanks congratulate each of the AAME recipients.

